



Proposal to Increase Pre-Apprenticeship Funds in New Mexico

Introduction

Apprenticeships in New Mexico's building trades are one of the most powerful pathways to a solid financial future for our families. Earning while they learn, so getting an education without debt, our students become highly skilled tradespeople in fields like electrical work, plumbing, ironworking, painting, and insulation.

Completing an apprenticeship also produces real and meaningful outcomes for employers. [93% of workers](#) who complete apprenticeships remain long-term employed for the rest of their lives.

It is no secret that our nation needs new infrastructure to continue growing responsibly. Another 500,000 trained workers [per year will](#) have to be trained to effectively keep up with demand. This is in addition to the workers now on the job. Without them schools, bridges, pipelines, and power systems don't get built.

So more apprentices means both better job opportunities AND better infrastructure for New Mexicans.

Problem

Nationwide, only [35% of apprentices](#) complete their training. [In FY 2021](#), more than 241,000 new apprentices entered the national system, and 96,000 apprentices graduated — out of over 593,000 total active apprentices. New Mexico's situation reflects this national trend.

Getting through an apprenticeship is difficult. The dropout rates, though, are very high for a system that produces real benefits for both individuals and the state as a whole. With New Mexico's recent investment into apprenticeships, for all the reasons described above, maximizing retention is necessary for that investment to bear the maximum benefit.

Pre-Apprenticeships Help

Pre-Apprenticeship programs are, based on research, one of the most proven ways to increase apprentice retention. These are 6-week training sessions designed to give prospective apprentices an introduction to the trades by covering subjects like basic math, blueprint reading, safety procedures, soft skills (communication, resume writing, etc), and physical conditioning. By helping build essential skills and connecting participants to supportive services such as transportation and childcare, high-quality pre-apprenticeships provide a solid foundation needed for the successful completion of registered apprenticeship programs.

They have been shown to [increase retention](#) in the construction trades, as students are both better prepared and have a deeper understanding of the job requirements of the trade. Furthermore, in New Mexico, completing a pre-apprenticeship means workers can enter their full time position at a higher pay grade and pre-apprenticeship is a way to focus on special populations who may need more assistance in getting to a registered apprenticeship program.

Lastly, pre-apprenticeships can be an effective strategy for integrating Career Technical Education programs at the high school level with apprenticeships that will lead to quality careers in the trades.

Proposal

New Mexico currently budgets \$1.2 Million for these programs through the Department of Workforce Solutions, with \$600k going to specific Building Trades programs. This allocation provides for 60 students to complete the program, which is a tiny fraction of the close to 1,000 yearly apprentices in New Mexico's Building and Construction Trades unions.

Our request is to increase this line item to \$5M in next year's budget. This will offer more New Mexicans a better opportunity to successfully earn while they learn, and give themselves and their communities a brighter, better future.